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SUNDAY READING. *J 23*

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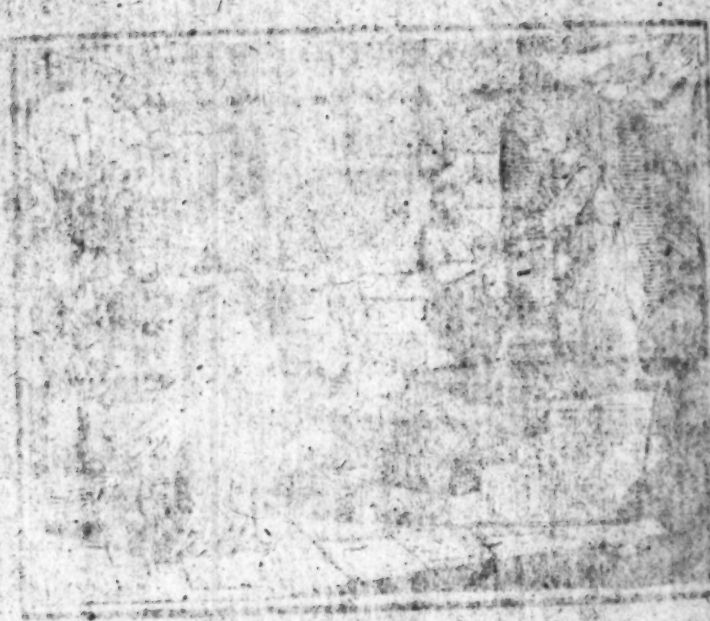
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THE NEW MODEL

CHRISTIANITY



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of the perfect we shall be at all ages, and in every situation in life. When you were learning to write you know you did not object to Mr. Tull's giving you good copies, though you was well convinced it was totally out of your power to equal them.

"I will not," again replied Martha, "I can imitate one as I imitate my Saviour? Did you become down from Heaven, or suppose to live and to die the same of mankind? Now you know it is not in my power to do any such thing. I cannot take death upon me, and heal the sick, and give sight to the blind, and make the lame walk."

DIVINE MODEL, &c.

"I will know," said Mrs. Bingham, "that no one of you of us can exactly perform the same as our Saviour did. I only mean in principle. What do you think of proposing him to be to wonderfully condescending, to leave us to be like him."

ENDEAVOUR to imitate your Saviour," said Mrs. Bingham, one evening to her maid Martha, whom she was carefully instructing in the duties of religion. "Imitate my Saviour!" repeated Martha, "dear ma'am, I thought he was so much lifted above us, that it would be quite presumptuous to try to be like him."

"It is true Martha," replied Mrs. Bingham, "we can never be as perfect as our divine master; but the nearer we approach to the example he has set us,

us, the better we shall be at all ages, and in every situation in life. When you were learning to write you know you did not object to Miss Julia's giving you good copies, though you was well convinced it was totally out of your power to equal them."

"But, ma'am," again returned Martha, "how can such a one as I imitate my Saviour? Did not he come down from Heaven, on purpose to live and to die for the sake of mankind? Now you know it is not in my power to do any such thing. I cannot raise dead persons to life, and heal the sick, and give sight to the blind, and make the lame walk. Besides, how can I go about to teach others, when I am so ignorant, and so much in need of instruction myself?"

"I well know," said Mrs. Bingham, "that neither you, or any of us, can exactly perform the same actions as our Saviour did, I only meant that we should endeavour to be guided by the same principle. What do you think prompted him to be so wonderfully condescending, as to leave the glory of happiness he enjoyed in Heaven, and take our nature upon him, with all its wants and infirmities? Certainly nothing but an earnest desire to do the will of his heavenly Father, and to prove his love to man. By these dispositions our Saviour was actuated during his whole stay on earth; and these dispositions should be cultivated by all his disciples.

"Very true, madam," said Martha.

"From our Saviour," continued Mrs. Bingham.

we learn the duty of prayer. Sometimes he past the whole night in devotion. He never joined in a meal, but he first thanked God for the food he had provided; and when he raised Lazarus from the dead, he piously expressed his gratitude to his heavenly Father, for enabling him to perform that wonderful miracle."

"O yes, ma'am," said Martha, "I remember we often hear of his praying."

"Our blessed Lord too has taught us," proceeded Mrs. Bingham, "to bear provocation, and even to forgive the greatest injuries. Should we not be ashamed of being put out of patience upon every trifling occasion, when we see with what mildness the Son of God bore with the neglect and dulness of his disciples? How cordially, upon Peter's repentance, he forgave his denial, and how earnestly he prayed for his murderers while hanging on the cross, to which they had nailed him."

"Dear! I wonder, I never thought of this before," said Martha. "Is there any other way, ma'am, in which we may imitate our Saviour?"

"Yes, Martha, we may imitate his *humility*. He chose to be born in an humble station, and aimed at no earthly riches or distinction. By condescending to wash the feet of his disciples, he proved to us, that we should never be above stooping to the lowliest offices for the good of others. The *benevolence* of Jesus, I just now indeed recommended to your

your imitation. We cannot, it is true, like him work a miracle to supply the wants of a multitude; but though we are placed in a low station, we may sometimes have it in our power, from our own scanty meal, to supply the hungry with a mouthful of bread. We cannot cure the sick with speaking word; but we may by nursing them with tenderness promote their recovery, or at least administer their comfort. In our own troubles, we learn resignation from our Saviour's example. In his agony, just before his crucifixion, his only prayer to God was, that if he was willing, he would remove from him the distress he at that moment endured, but that, nevertheless, God's will might be done. In the cruel treatment he afterwards met with not a single complaint escaped him. He seemed to be more concerned for his country, his mother, and his friends, than for his own suffering. In short Martha, if you examine with attention the life of our Saviour, you will find, that he has himself set us the example of every virtue which he has commanded us to practise."

Martha would have been glad that her mistress should have proceeded farther; but the bell rang, and Mrs. Bingham was obliged to join her family, in the supper parlour.

Martha was a pious, well-disposed young woman. She had never before considered, that one designed for our Saviour's abode on earth, was to "set us an example that we should follow his steps;" but at that moment it was suggested to her, she rejoiced

think that it was in any degree in her power to imitate the Lord of glory ; and she determined to make it her endeavour in whatever she engaged, to reflect how her Saviour would have acted in the same circumstances.

In her prayers the next morning she did not fail to implore God to assist her to keep her good resolutions, for she well knew, that she was frail and sinful, and that nothing but Almighty grace could enable her to make any improvement.

Sally Hague was a girl about thirteen years of age, whom Mrs. Bingham had taken into her family, partly out of compassion to her parents, and partly from consideration to Martha, who having a great deal both of house-work and needle-work to do, she thought stood in need of some assistance.

Martha was too good a woman to make a slave of Sally, as is unhappily the practice of some servants who have girls under them, as it is called : but her natural disposition was hasty, and Sally's extreme dullness often put her patience to the proof, and she was apt to reprove her in a sharp tone of voice.

It was Sally's business to put the study to rights against her master came down. Martha had several times shown her how to do it ; but on going into the room the morning after the above-mentioned conversation with her mistress, she found the books laid upon a wrong shelf, the chairs out of their proper

proper places, the dust left in a corner, and not a spark of fire to be seen.

“Why you plaguy torment,” said she in an angry manner, “what in the world have you been doing these two hours? I wish with all my heart my Mistress had never hired you, for I’ll be hanged if you do not make more work than you save. Now my Master will be down in a few minutes, and nothing will be ready, and then a fine noise I shall have in my ears I suppose.” “I am very sorry,” said Sally, with tears in her eyes. “But cannot do any thing now?” “Do you any thing?” repeated Martha; “no, nothing, but go about your business. You are always in my way, you awkward hussy!”

Sally walked slowly and sorrowfully to the other end of the room, and Martha, who was banging about the tongs and poker with the utmost violence, blushed to think how soon she had broken her resolution. She compared her abusive language to the poor girl, with the mild rebuke of our Lord to his disciples for their repeated drowsiness, at a time when he stood most in need of friendly consolation. Determined not to imitate his example, she determined to conquer her ill humour, let it cost her what it would, and calling Sally in a milder voice, she said, “come and let me shew you how to light the fire. You should not cram the stove with coals, and scatter the wood in separate places; that will never do. You should put the sticks across one another at the bottom in the front of the grate, then put the last cinders lightly over them, and a few round coals

and not the top; and afterwards, with a piece of lighted paper, you must set fire to the sticks through the bottom bars: then it will burn up presently. Come, do not cry, there's a good girl! You'll do better to-morrow." Just as she said these words, her Master came into the room much earlier than usual; finding his books moved from their proper place, and his study in confusion, he flew into a violent passion, and cursed and abused Martha in the most dreadful manner.

Martha did not attempt to vindicate herself, by repeating the blame upon Sally; for she remembered that her Saviour, though loaded with false accusations, "*held his peace*;" yet, when Mr. Bingham had left the room, as she brooded over the hard names by which he had called her, she felt by no means inclined to forgive him; and had an opportunity at that moment occurred, she could have resolved to revenge herself.

To overcome this vindictive frame of mind, which she was conscious was displeasing to the Almighty, she reflected on the affectionate lamentation of her Saviour over Jerusalem, in which city he had been so often ill treated. She thought too of prayer for his murderers. "*Father forgive them for they know not what they do.*" "Was this the way," said she, "that the blessed Jesus behaved to his enemies, and shall not I pardon a few passionate words? Shall I not forgive him, whom upon repentance God will forgive, and for whom Christ died? I prayed a moment for a better temper; and she quitted

quitted the study, which she had now finished, in quiet and composed frame of mind.

After breakfast, as she was wiping away crumbs, a large piece of bread fell into the ash. No matter, said she to herself, it is but the bottom of a loaf, and we may as well begin upon new one at luncheon. The words of her Saviour "*Gather up your fragments that remain, that nothing be lost!*" occurred to her memory, and she picked up the bread immediately. She remembered that those words were spoken at a time when Jesus Christ had just been proving that he had all nature at his command, by the wonderful supply he had furnished. Perhaps, thought she, when the broken pieces of bread and fish were spread over the grass, they did not look of much value, yet we are told they were sufficient to fill twelve baskets. If all the scraps of this large family were fairly eaten, how many pounds of victuals would it save in the course of a year. It is possible my Master and Mistress would then give so much the more to the poor; at least, the money that buys the food is theirs, and we have no right to squander it.

In the evening as the man and maids were sitting together, the yard-bell rung. John said, it was not his place to answer the back bell, Sally was upstairs, Betty and Ann, who were at work, accused John of ill-nature, and declared they would not stir if the people rang the bell till they broke. Martha was beginning to make the same silly declaration.

ration, but she ran to the gate on recollecting the words of our Saviour, that *whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all: For when the Son of man came not to be minister unto, but minister.*

Martha, like the rest of the world, loved her own ease and convenience; she was fond of being treated with respect; she could not bear to be thought lightly of, and was disposed to stand up for her rights with whoever should oppose them; yet when she considered that the Redeemer of mankind had descended to lay aside his glory for our sakes, and that instead of being born as a great prince, in which situation he might have had thousands at his command, he took upon him the form of a poor man, and gave up all his time to the good of others, she was ashamed of her own pride and selfishness. Not a day past but afforded some opportunities of subduing these bad dispositions, by the imitation of the glorious example she had set herself to follow. The attempt was for a long time attended with the greatest difficulty, but her own endeavours, and divine grace, in the end so far succeeded, that it appeared to be natural to her in most instances, generally to prefer others to herself. Did a small piece of pudding, or a custard or two come out of the parlour, Martha, instead of insisting upon a right to a part, was willing to give up her share to the others. Were there any little perquisites respecting which it was difficult to decide to which of the servants

servants they properly belonged, Martha was first to wave her claim.

Perhaps it may be thought, that by thus laying herself open to be imposed upon by others, she must have led a miserable life. But I will venture to say that by the disputes she avoided, and the love and good will of her fellow servants, which she effectually gained, more than compensated for the little sacrifices.

Once Martha detected Sally in an atrocious falsehood. This was a crime of which she herself had never been guilty, and of which she had a greater horror than of almost any other.

Mortified on finding the pains she had frequently taken to instruct her in her duty had been attended with so little success, she for some time gave herself no further trouble about her, and even indulged a growing aversion to the girl. One day, however, often presented itself, and at last prompted her to redouble her diligence, to prevent Sally, if possible from falling into bad courses.

The Saviour of the world ate and drank with publicans and sinners. The wretches, whom men else beheld with scorn, by him were received with kindness, and directed in the way to everlasting life. And would he, thought Martha, for one moment have cast off our poor ignorant Sally?

It was about two months from the time we in-

led Martha to the acquaintance of our readers,
 when Mary Saunders, a young woman with whom
 she was intimately acquainted, call to inform her
 that her Mistress was in want of an upper servant;
 that she was certain, if she would engage to
 do so immediately she might procure the place;
 which, she said, was well worth having, as the
 wages were ten guineas, and the perquisites va-
 luable. Martha hesitated. Mary would fain have
 persuaded her to return home with her, and hire
 herself to Mrs. Freeman immediately. This how-
 ever she would by no means consent to; but thank-
 ing her friend; promised that she should have an
 answer the next morning.

The moment she was gone, she began to reflect
 very seriously on the proposal she had received.
 She could not think, without regret, of quitting
 Mr. Bingham, with whom she had lived from a
 child, and who had always treated her with the ut-
 most kindness. To leave her so suddenly, and
 for such a reason, would appear both unhandsome
 and ungrateful: and at this time in particular,
 when her Mistress was under the necessity of going
 some weeks into the country, and had several
 times told her, that she entrusted her aged and
 infirm mother to her care during her absence.
 It was the temptation very great to enquire after
 the place, where the profits would be considerably
 greater than at present; her affections having long
 been engaged to a worthy young man, to whom she
 was to be united, as soon as their mutual savings
 should be sufficient to enable them to furnish a
 couple

couple of rooms and purchase a few household materials.

To fortify her mind to decline an alluring advantage she flew to her usual resource. She perused in the iv chapter of St. Matthew the account of our Saviour's temptation. From our great ignorance of the nature of evil spirits, it is not easy thoroughly to comprehend the nature of this part of his ministry; yet we may learn from it sufficient to perceive that our Lord was, like us, expose to temptation, and that he nobly resisted it. This example was not lost upon the worthy Martha. "Whatever it may cost me," said she, "I am determined to do my duty. Jesus Christ delayed not a moment to answer the artful tempter. I will therefore step to Mary directly and tell her how I have made up my mind. To-morrow morning I may be weaker."

She accordingly, with her Mistress's leave, went to Mrs. Freeman's immediately, and not all the persuasions of Mary Saunders, to whom she was extremely partial, could prevail upon her to alter her determination.

Martha passed but a dull summer. Mrs. Dawson the old lady of whom she had the care, was so helpless as to require constant attendance. Her spirits were bad, and she suffered much pain, so that she wept and complained incessantly. Martha's youthful vivacity made her desire a more enlivening scene, and her patience was often on the point of being exhausted; but the thought of the tenderness

with which our Saviour heard the complaints of the miserable objects among whom he past his life, and the readiness with which he relieved them, taught her to substitute pity for disgust, and to endeavour, by every kind attention, to alleviate the poor man's sufferings.

But it would be endless to recite all the instances in which Martha profited by seriously contemplating the spotless example of Jesus Christ. Suffice it to say, that by this means she became one of the most perfect of christians, and most amiable of women. She was, however, from priding herself in her improvement, the practice she had adopted of continually comparing her actions with those of her Saviour, made her more sensible of her deficiencies. Unable, after all her attempts, to equal her exalted model, she felt that she must be indebted to his mediation, if her imperfect endeavours were accepted, and gloriously rewarded by everlasting life.

Though she acted from no worldly view, yet her heavenly Father graciously thought fit to reward her in this life. She had soon reason to rejoice that she had not followed the advice of Mary Saunders, as Mr. Freeman became a bankrupt, all his servants were suddenly dismissed, and several received not the full wages due to them. Mrs. Dawson at her death left her a legacy of twenty pounds as a reward for her fidelity and attention; and shortly after she became possessed of this sum, she made the worthy youth happy who had long loved her, and esteemed her virtues.

A. R.

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